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Prominent Features of the System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and China's Governance System

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ABSTRACT

The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system have their own prominent advantages and features. Together, they are able to focus concentrated efforts on key large-scale projects, achieving great feats and securing popular benefits that are welcomed by the broad masses. This people-centered system is able to meet the ever-growing need of the population for a better life, and enjoys essentially universal support. The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics aims to unify the immediate and long-term interests of the people, and to combine the overall interests of the overwhelming majority of the people with the special interests of certain popular sectors. It also reduces the consumption of social resources and realizes greater social benefits. The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system are characterized by continuity and stability. They feature an internal unity of "success will come whether I see it achieved or not" and "success requires my participation and effort," and are therefore capable of consistently executing each of the major strategic tasks that have been formulated.

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The Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues concerning Upholding and Improving the System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Advancing the Modernization of China's System and Capacity for Governance (hereafter referred to as "the Decision"), adopted at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), clarifies the essence, significant advantages, distinctive features and important roles of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system. To understand China's development and future trends, we should first grasp the remarkable features of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and of China's governance system.

1. This Is a People-Centered System and Enjoys the Support of the People

As socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the principal contradiction within Chinese society has undergone a historic transformation, and the growing material and cultural needs of the people are now embodied in the need for a better

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life. How will China meet this need? The Decision examines from many angles the efforts being made to satisfy people's new demands and expectations through system construction. It also states clearly that China is to follow the trend of the times; adapt to the changes in the principal contradiction facing Chinese society; take full responsibility for a great struggle, great project, great cause and great dream; continuously meet the people's new expectation for a better life; and overcome various risks and challenges on the way forward. To that end, greater efforts must be made to uphold and improve the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and to modernize China's governance system and capacity (CPC Central Committee 2019, 4–5). The Decision also calls for maintaining and enhancing the social welfare system so as to satisfy the growing need of urban and rural residents for a better life (27), while determining as soon as possible the mechanisms necessary if these new expectations of the people for a better life are to be met (27).

1.1. Improving the Basic Socialist Economic System, Promoting Quality Development, Building a Modern Economic System, and Meeting People's Higher Material and Cultural Needs

In China, the main social contradictions have undergone a historic transformation, and the material and cultural needs of the people are now embodied in the need for a better life. The material and cultural needs have not disappeared, but have become important elements in the striving for a new, better life, and China should still attach great importance to them. China is currently at the primary stage of socialism. It remains a developing country, and its per capita GDP has just reached US $10,000 (Wang 2020). It has not yet entered the ranks of high-income countries, and people's material and cultural needs are still extremely pressing. China will not completely solve the problem of absolute poverty until the end of 2020, and it will be many years before the phenomenon of relative poverty is truly solved. The material and cultural needs in the new era are greater in three respects. First, the quality of demand is higher, with more attention paid to the state of material culture. Second, demand is greater and has become more and more diversified, from sewing machines 40 years ago to television sets 30 years ago, car engines 20 years ago, cell phones 10 years ago, and increasingly in recent years, requiring the satisfaction of people's psychological needs. Third, the changes in demand have accelerated, with people expecting their demands to be fulfilled within the shortest possible time. In the past, China dealt mainly with the problem of not having goods at all, then with the problem of shortages, and then with that of not having sufficient material culture, while today the problem it is dealing with has only to do with the quality of the material culture. How can this problem be remedied? The answer lies in adhering to the basic socialist economic system, giving full play to the decisive role of the market in resource allocation, giving better play to the role of the government, comprehensively implementing the new concept of development, sticking to supply-side structural reform as the main line, and accelerating the construction of a modern economic system. In terms of the supply of high-quality cultural products, China needs first to improve the system of protection for people's cultural rights and interests; to adhere to a people-oriented approach; to improve the incentive mechanism for the creation, production and dissemination of cultural products; and to introduce more high-quality cultural products for the population. Second, China needs to improve

the mechanisms of the modern cultural industry and of the market system, and to improve the policies pertaining to the cultural economy with the aim of quality development.

1.2. Meeting the People's "Six New Demands" for Democracy, Rule of Law, Fairness, Justice, Security and the Environment with Effective System Construction

Since the historic transformation of the main social contradictions in the new era, the people have not only been demanding a better material and cultural life, but have also raised more and more demands concerning democracy, the rule of law, fairness, justice, security and the environment. In order to meet the people's democratic demands, the socialist democratic system with Chinese characteristics requires supporting and guaranteeing people's exercise of state power through the People's Congress, and ensuring that people's congresses at all levels are democratically elected, accountable to and supervised by the people. In addition, people's self-management, self-service, self-education and self-supervision need to be widely implemented in the governance of urban and rural communities, in public affairs at the grassroots level, and in public welfare undertakings. The channels through which the people can express their opinions and suggestions need to be widened, in order to vigorously promote the institutionalization, standardization, and routinization of direct democracy at the grassroots level. To realize people's demand for the rule of law, the legal system in socialism with Chinese characteristics requires strict, fair and civilized law enforcement, standardized free discretion in law enforcement, and intensified law enforcement in key areas that concern the immediate interests of the people, so as to ensure fair, efficient, and authoritative jurisdiction. In order to realize people's demand for fairness and justice, the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics not only emphasizes that the fruits of reform and development should benefit all the people to a greater extent and in a fairer manner, but also puts stress on efforts to make the people feel that they have been fairly and justly dealt with in every judicial case. To meet the popular demand for security, China's governance system emphasizes that guaranteeing people's security is its prime purpose. The governance system defends the organic unity of popular security, political security and the supremacy of the national interest, and ensures that the people live and work in peace and stability while society enjoys harmony and order. In order to realize people's environmental demands, China stresses the need to adhere to and improve the system of ecological civilization, promoting the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature. Only through the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and its governance system can this better life be fully realized. Without these systems, there will be nothing but chaos.

1.3. Achieving a Popular Sense of Gain, Happiness and Security through a Scientifically Constructed System

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has put forward the important idea of enhancing people's sense of gain, happiness and security, an idea first raised on February 27, 2015, in an important speech at the 10th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening the Reform,[1] and which has been stressed in slightly different wording on various occasions since. In a speech at a meeting of the

Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 19th CPC Central Committee with Chinese and foreign journalists, Xi Jinping said:

> We must keep in mind that the people's aspiration for a better life is our goal, adhere to the people-centered idea of development, strive to ensure and improve people's livelihoods, constantly enhance their sense of gain, happiness and security, and continuously promote common prosperity for all the people.[2]

In the year 2019 alone, Xi Jinping elaborated on this issue many times. During an inspection visit to Chongqing from April 15 to 17, 2019, Xi Jinping called a meeting to address the outstanding issues of "two no worries and three guarantees,"[3] and delivered an important speech. He pointed out that efforts should be made to ensure safe production and food and drug safety, to prevent major natural disasters, to maintain social stability and to constantly enhance people's sense of gain, happiness and security.[4] On May 31, 2019, Xi Jinping said in a speech at the Work Meeting on the Educational Theme of "Remain True to Our Original Aspiration and Keep Our Mission Firmly in Mind" that we should guard against formalism and bureaucratism, so as to effectively implement the line, principle, and policies of the party, to promote the resolution of prominent issues that are of great concern to the people, and to constantly enhance people's sense of gain, happiness and security.[5] On July 5, 2019, in a speech at the Summary Meeting on Deepening the Reform of Party and State Institutions, Xi Jinping pointed out that high priority should be given to the implementation of reforms that are related to overall economic and social development, that involve major institutional innovations, and that are conducive to enhancing people's sense of gain.[6] On an inspection visit to Inner Mongolia from July 15 to 16, 2019, aimed at guiding education around the theme of "remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind," he suggested:

> We must keep firmly in mind our original aspiration and mission, implement the idea of people-centered development, and put the new development concept into practice, so as to achieve steady growth, promote reform, make structural adjustments, improve people's living standards, guard against risks and ensure stability. We will continue to enhance the sense of gain, happiness and security of the people of all ethnic groups, and make this scenic route of the northern border of our motherland more beautiful.[7]

On the afternoon of September 9, 2019, Xi presided over the 10th Meeting of the Central Committee on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform, and delivered an important speech. It was pointed out in the meeting that China always stresses as its departure point the needs of economic and social development, and the implementation of reform beginning with things that concern the everyday life of the people. China has acted in timely fashion to launch a number of policy-oriented innovations that involve only slight modifications but yield quick results. These innovations have solved many troublesome problems concerning people's livelihoods, and have enhanced people's sense of gain, happiness and security.[8] During an inspection visit to Shanghai from November 2 to 3, 2019, Xi Jinping said that whether in urban planning or building, new urban area construction or old urban area reconstruction, government officials and party cadres must place the people at the center, focus on their needs, and rationally arrange production zones, living space and ecological space. China should follow a path of quality development that is meaningful, intensive and green, and strive to create a good environment suitable for business, living, pleasure and tourism, so as to create a stronger sense of gain and a happier

and better life for the people.[9] It was pointed out in the Central Economic Work Meeting held from December 10 to 12, 2019 that the people's sense of gain, happiness and security had risen in 2019, that the main indicators for the 13th Five-Year Plan had witnessed the expected progress, and that major progress had been achieved towards completing the construction of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.[10] From December 26 to 27, 2019, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held a thematic meeting that was aimed at enhancing inner-party democratic life and that centered on the topic of "remaining true to our original aspiration and keeping our mission firmly in mind." In his speech at the meeting, Xi Jinping pointed out that CPC needed to take the people's position in thinking, decision-making and handling of issues, to reach an understanding through various channels of their opinions and demands, criticisms and suggestions, and to make real efforts to address their concerns, alleviate their grievances and warm their hearts, so that the people could have a more substantial, guaranteed, and sustainable sense of gain, happiness and security.[11] On January 8, 2020, in his speech at the Summary Meeting on the Educational Theme of "Remain True to Our Original Aspiration and Keep Our Mission Firmly in Mind," he pointed out that all party members and cadres should go to the grassroots communities to respond in an active manner to the concerns of the masses. They should effectively address the most immediate and authentic interests that are of the greatest concern to the people, in particular the difficulties in receiving medical treatment, attending school, obtaining employment and housing, and other troublesome and painful issues. The aim should be to meet people's expectations with visible changes, and to significantly enhance people's sense of gain, happiness and security (Xi 2020b).

The sense of gain, happiness and security marks the depth and breadth of people's happiness in life, and sets the direction for China's future development. As a result of China's system-building, the people's satisfaction with their country has continued to increase, making China one of the countries with the highest degree of satisfaction and highest sense of well-being. The people are always full of hope for the future. Through the projects for achieving a safe China, with institutional improvement in all fields while maintaining an environment where people can live and work in peace and contentment, China has become one of the safest countries in the world.

1.4. Promoting the Establishment and Improvement of a Basic National Public Service System to "Ensure Universal Access to Childcare, Education, Employment, Medical Services, Elderly Care, Housing, and Social Welfare Assistance," and to Keep Moving toward Common Prosperity

"Ensuring universal access to childcare, education, employment, medical services, elderly care, housing, and social welfare assistance" (Xi 2017a, 23) is an important task set by the 19th CPC National Congress, as well as an important component of a better life for the population. Since the 19th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed the importance of this task. To that end, the Decision stresses that China must to the best of its ability improve the system of basic national public services concerning access to childcare, education, employment, medical services, elderly care, housing and social welfare assistance, and must work within its capacity to ensure that the basic needs of the people are met. Indeed, China is taking solid steps toward building these systems.[12] In the report of the 19th

CPC National Congress, childcare features as an important part of securing and improving people's livelihoods. In November 2018, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued "Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Standardizing the Development of Preschool Education,"[13] which aimed at solving the problem of difficult and unaffordable access to kindergartens. In May 2019 the General Office of the State Council issued the "Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Development of Child Care Services for Infants and Young Children under the Age of Three,"[14] which makes child care more responsive to public needs. As the construction of the system has gone ahead, the mechanisms for guaranteeing preschool and special education and for universalizing senior high school education have been improved, while the integrated development of urban and rural compulsory education has helped to realize equity, integration and high quality in the educational field. In the area of employment-related income, China has continued to improve the distribution system, with distribution according to work playing a dominant role and different forms of distribution developing side by side. The country adheres to the principle of more pay for more work, with the emphasis on guaranteeing income from work and on increasing the remuneration of workers, especially of those at the frontline. It sets out to raise the proportion of income from work in the primary distribution, to encourage people to enrich themselves through hard work, to protect legitimate income, to increase the incomes of low-income people and to enlarge the middle-income group. In health care, China has been strengthening institutional guarantees for the improvement of people's health. It will continue to pay close attention to the whole life cycle and the whole health process, and to improve its national health care policy so that the broad masses of the people will enjoy fair, accessible, comprehensive and continuous health services. In the area of provisions for the elderly, China will actively respond to the ageing of the population through constructive and systematic measures. It will accelerate the building of a system of elderly care services with coordinated home, community and institutional care, as well as integrated medical and daily care, so that all elderly people enjoy high-quality care services, with sustainable care, support, entertainment and ease of mind. In the field of housing, China is speeding up the establishment of a housing system that involves the co-existence of rental and commercial housing, that has multiple supply bodies and multiple channels for ensuring that needs are met, and that strives to provide "shelter for all in need," as an ancient Chinese poet put it. In the field of social welfare assistance, China aims to give full play to the role of the "third distribution," to develop charity and other public welfare undertakings, and to make overall plans to improve the systems of social assistance, social welfare, charity, and priority care and placement.

2. This Is a Cost-Effective System of Doing Important Things with Less Money but Greater Output

The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics focuses on unifying the immediate and long-term interests of the people, while reconciling the general interests of the overwhelming majority of the people with the special interests of particular sectors of the population. In this way, it aims to reduce the consumption of social resources to a relatively low level, while achieving greater social benefits.

2.1. The System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and China's Governance System Are Based on an Understanding of Objective Laws, to Which China Adheres and Which It Adapts and Applies

The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system are both based on an understanding of a series of objective laws. To carry forward the building of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the governance system, emphasis is placed on acquiring a profound grasp of the laws governing the communist party, socialist construction, and the development of human society. On this basis, the aim is to achieve systematic improvement and development. Stress is placed on grasping the general law of modernization, the universal law of socialist modernization and the special law of China's socialist modernization, so as to apply this understanding to the task of modernizing China's governance system and capacity in an all-round manner. The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system are united in stressing the need to grasp the economic laws underlying scientific development, the natural laws behind sustainable development and the social laws behind inclusive development, so as to achieve stable long-term economic and social development. Also emphasized is the need to grasp the laws that determine how political parties are built and operate, the laws that underlie the functioning of communist parties, and finally, the laws behind the governance of the CPC. On that basis, and with that understanding, the need is then to build the CPC into the most advanced, powerful and vigorous political party in the world.

To promote the development of socialist modernization, China has always emphasized the importance of studying the objective laws that underlie it. As Xi Jinping has pointed out, the modernization of the Western developed countries was a "series-type" development process, with industrialization, urbanization, agricultural modernization and information-based development occurring as a series of processes that took more than 200 years to reach its current level.[15] For China to make up those "lost 200 years" means that its development is necessarily a "parallel" process of overlapped industrialization, informationalization, urbanization and agricultural modernization. For the process of urbanization, the implementing of the rural vitalization strategy represents an important decision undertaken by the 19th CPC National Congress,[16] and provides the key to China's efforts concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers in the new era. To secure the relevant goals, China is acting in line with the laws of rural development, with planned action, categorized progress, increased inputs, hard work, and as a consequence, continuous new achievements in rural vitalization.

In the development of science and technology, China always stresses the need to follow the laws of technological development, to perform well in the area of systematized layout, to choose the best options and to achieve breakthroughs in key areas. For example, China has concentrated substantial efforts on the development of a manned space program, following the principle of "cost-effectiveness with greater output." Even though China's manned space program started late, it has gone ahead in leapfrog fashion, and has saved a great deal of money in research and development. In 2018, China for the first time surpassed the United States in the number of space rocket launches, with 35 successful launches compared with 30 by the United States. In this respect, China came to rank as the world's number one.[17] In 2019 China again outstripped the United States in the number of launches, with more than 30.[18] According to data released by the *Space Launch*

Report, China as of December 11, 2019, had launched 31 rockets into orbit during that year; of these, 29 had successfully put a satellite into orbit.[19] Then at 20:45 Beijing time on December 27 China launched another rocket, carrying the Shijian20 Satellite. The mission was a complete success, with the satellite successfully entering its intended orbit.[20] This means that China has finally and thoroughly mastered the technology of heavy-duty rockets, with both the rate of successful launches and their cost-effectiveness far exceeding the figures for countries like the United States and Russia.

The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics has shown an exceptional ability to prevent harmful mistakes, and it is fair to say that it has avoided major errors. For example, China has concentrated efforts from various sectors on the development of high-speed railways, which over a period of 10 years grew from nothing to more than 35,000 km by the end of December 2019.[21] This demonstrates the great systemic advantage that China enjoys. The central government's determination to develop high speed rail is unswerving. All of the parties concerned have made concerted efforts to pool labor power, material and financial resources. Several hundred billion Yuan have been invested every year. Governments at all levels have solved the complex problems of how to relocate people living along the planned routes in the shortest possible time, while enjoying their cooperation. This, along with an integrated nationwide plan, has effectively promoted the development of high-speed railways throughout the country. In the long run, such a system is highly efficient. In some countries, a variety of interlocked interests exist behind the national rail system, making efficiency difficult to achieve and giving rise to frequent errors. The high-speed railway in California, for example, was planned in 2008, but construction did not begin until 2015. The total of more than 2,000 km originally planned has now been reduced to 177 km, and the lines are not expected to be completed until 2033.[22] The problem is that it has already cost several billion US dollars, so much that President Donald Trump tweeted in February 2019 that, "California has been forced to cancel the massive bullet train project after having spent and wasted many billions of dollars,"[23] and that "the failed Fast Train project in California, where the cost overruns are becoming world record setting, is hundreds of times more expensive than the desperately needed [US-Mexico border] wall!"[24]

Another example is the Beijing Daxing International Airport, which opened at the end of September 2019, with a total area of more than 1.4 million square meters and a main terminal of 1.03 million square meters. The *Guardian* called it the first of the new seven wonders of the world.[25] As stated by the BBC website on September 26, 2019, the airport opened just before the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. According to the BBC report, the Daxing International Airport features the world's largest single-body terminal, and represents the world's largest integrated transport hub. Designed and built in less than five years despite an extremely high level of construction difficulty, it embodies the industrial and engineering capabilities that have emerged in China over the past decade.[26] In London, by contrast, it took 13 years to build Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport, while the Berlin Airport took 25 years and is yet to be completed. Providing a still greater contrast is the situation in Canada, where in 1972 the federal government, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, purchased 18,600 acres of land at Pickering to build the airport of the future. After 48 years, construction has yet to begin. In 2013 the last conservative government proposed that development begin, but this has not been implemented.[27]

2.2. The System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and China's Governance System Are Based on the Collective Leadership System of the Communist Party of China

Since the reform and opening-up, the CPC has emphasized the importance of building its system of collective leadership. On November 13, 1981, in a meeting with Dahra Janeikovitch of the Yugoslav newspaper *Courier*, Deng Xiaoping stressed:

> Since China crushed the gang of four, it has emphasized collective leadership. In particular, after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in December 1978, we have followed Mao Zedong Thought in the analyses of the new situation in China under the principle of seeking truth from facts. New things have appeared and new questions been raised, which are discussed and decided collectively. Of course, I do not deny the role of the individual, for example, I personally played the role I should play. Many specific policies and specific issues have been put forward by this or that comrade, not all of them have been put forward by me alone. It can be said that problems are discussed collectively and finally decided collectively. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2004, 784)

In June 1981, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee adopted a "Resolution on Several Historical Issues concerning the Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China." As stated in the resolution, it is necessary to establish a Marxist view that the party must be led collectively by leaders whose virtues and abilities have been tested in mass struggles, and any form of personality cult must be prohibited. The prestige of party leaders must be maintained while ensuring that their activities are under the supervision of the party and the people. The CPC has always attached great importance to developing inner-party democracy. All reports of the Party Congress, documents of the plenary sessions of the party, important documents and major decisions of the party, government work reports, major reform and development measures, and important work documents of government departments are presented only after consulting with party members within a certain range, with multiple rounds in some cases. Sometimes opinions and suggestions need to be sought from all provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, or from all departments directly under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee and from all departments of the central government. These are all necessary procedures. As Xi Jinping points out,

> Major decisions of the CPC Central Committee are made with great care. Major plans go through discussions in various departments, relevant leading groups of the Central Committee, and the State Council before they are submitted to the meetings of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and the meetings of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee for deliberation. If they fail to pass the review, they will be taken back for re-examination and revision, to be discussed again in later meetings. These procedures are mandatory and have been institutionally stipulated. Many important work arrangements have to go through five or six rounds of check from departmental proposal to the approval by the Political Bureau, and legal matters have to be submitted to the National People's Congress for discussion. It may seem cumbersome, but the aim is to give full play to democracy, to collect a wide range of opinions and suggestions, so as to hear voices from different angles and avoid bias, and to make scientific, democratic and law-based decisions. (Xi 2019, 185)

This democratic system ensures that decision-making is efficient and of high quality. China's system-building and organizational institutions, first and foremost the CPC Central

Committee, the Political Bureau and the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, are all under collective leadership. The central committees for financial and economic affairs, foreign affairs, comprehensive deepening of reform, and comprehensive law-based governance, all under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee, ensure the collective and scientific character of decision-making.

3. This Is a Relay System That Ensures the Succession of One Generation by Another

The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system are characterized by continuity and stability, and are able to carry out consistently every major strategic task that is formulated.

3.1. For 40 Years, China Has Relied on Its Institutional System to Achieve "Relay-Style" Development, and Is Close to Its First-Centenary Goal of Completing the Construction of a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

On October 29, 2015, Xi Jinping pointed out,

> At the beginning of the reform and opening-up, Comrade Deng Xiaoping first used the concept of a moderately prosperous society to explain Chinese-style modernization, and clearly stated the goal of "building a moderately prosperous society in China" by the end of the 20th century. With the concerted efforts of the whole party and the people of all ethnic groups, this goal was fulfilled as scheduled at the end of the last century, and on the whole, the life of the people reached a moderately prosperous level. On this basis, the 16th CPC National Congress set the goal for the first 20 years of this century of building a moderately prosperous society at a higher level, one that would cover the entire population in all respects. Since the 16th CPC National Congress, the CPC has kept that goal in mind, and, with efforts from one generation to another, with tasks relayed from one leadership to another, has made remarkable achievements in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. (Xi 2016, 10)

One important reason why this continuous "relay" has been possible lies in the strong stability and continuity of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and of China's governance system.

More than 40 years ago, in a meeting with then Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira on December 6, 1979, Deng Xiaoping used the phrase "comparative prosperity" (a different way to translate the Chinese phrase *Xiao Kang*, i.e., moderately prosperous society) to describe the Chinese-style modernization:

> The four modernizations we are striving to achieve are modernizations with Chinese characteristics. Our concept of the four modernizations is different from yours. By achieving the four modernizations, we mean achieving a comparative prosperity. Even if we realize the four modernizations by the end of this century, our per capita GNP will still be very low. If we want to reach the level of a relatively wealthy country of the Third World with a per capita GNP of US$1,000 for example, we will have to make an immense effort. Even if we reach that level, we will still be a backward nation compared to Western countries. . . . China will be a country with only a comparative prosperity by that time. (Deng 1994, 237)

In September 1982, the report of the 12th CPC National Congress stated:

> The general objective of China's economic construction in the 20 years from 1981 to the end of this century is to quadruple the gross output value of industry and agriculture in the country on the premise of constantly improving economic returns. . . . In achieving this goal, the income of the people in both urban and rural areas will double, and people's material life will reach a moderately prosperous level.[28]

By 2000, after more than 20 years of struggle, the goal of a well-off society overall was achieved.

On the basis of the general realization of a moderately prosperous society, Jiang Zemin (2006b, 413–417) put forward the concept of "building a moderately prosperous society in all respects." This idea was first advanced in January 2001 in a speech to a meeting of the heads of the publicity departments around the country. In his report to the 16th CPC National Congress on November 8, 2002, Jiang Zemin further clarified the task of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects in the following 20 years:

> We will concentrate our efforts in the first 20 years of this century on the overall construction of a moderately prosperous society at a higher level that will benefit the entire Chinese population, with a stronger economy, greater democracy, more advanced science and education, a thriving culture, greater social harmony and a better quality of life.[29]

Hu Jintao's report to the 17th CPC National Congress set out a further new goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. By 2020, when the aim of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects was to be achieved, China, a major developing socialist country with a long history of civilization, would become a country that had basically achieved industrialization, significantly increased its comprehensive national power, and had one of the largest domestic markets in the world. It would be a country where people were generally better off, people's quality of life had improved markedly and the condition of the natural environment was good. It would be a country where people enjoyed more extensive democratic rights, with a higher quality of civilization and a greater range of spiritual pursuits. It would be a country with a more complete system in all its aspects, and with a more vibrant, stable and solidary society. It would be a country more open to the outside world, a country possessing more affinity with other countries, and a country making greater contributions to human civilization.[30] In his report to the 18th CPC National Congress, Hu Jintao proposed the goal of completing the construction of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, stressing that in line with the reality of China's economic and social development, the country should strive to meet the new requirements on the basis of the goal, set at the 16th and 17th CPC National Congresses, of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.[31]

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has made completing the construction of a moderately prosperous society in all respects an important part of the "two centenary goals," and has treated it as the goal of the "four-pronged comprehensive" strategy. He points out that completing the construction of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020 is a solemn commitment that the CPC has made to the people and to history (Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 53). In October 2015, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee passed the "Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee on the Formulation of the 13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development," which set out the new requirements for completing the construction of a moderately prosperous society:

sustained medium-to-high rates of economic growth; a general improvement in people's living standards and quality of life; a marked improvement in the cultural level of the population and in the level of social civilization; an overall improvement in the state of the natural environment; and a more mature and established system in all areas.[32] The report of the 19th CPC National Congress pointed out:

> The period between now and 2020 will be decisive in finishing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. We must follow the requirements on building this society set out at our 16th, 17th, and 18th National Congresses, act in response to the evolution of the principal contradiction in Chinese society, and promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement. We must show firm resolve in implementing the strategy for invigorating China through science and education, the strategy on developing a quality workforce, the innovation-driven development strategy, the rural vitalization strategy, the coordinated regional development strategy, the sustainable development strategy, and the military-civilian integration strategy. We must focus on priorities, address inadequacies, and shore up points of weakness. . . . We must take tough steps to forestall and defuse major risks, carry out targeted poverty alleviation, and prevent and control pollution, so that the moderately prosperous society we build earns the people's approval and stands the test of time. (Xi 2017a, 27–28)

This goal will be achieved during the current year, and will undoubtedly represent one of the results of the institutional relay.

3.2. Over the Past 30 Years, China Has Constantly Improved Its System and Perfected the System of Market Economy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

From the beginning of reform and opening-up, Deng Xiaoping explored an important question: can socialism develop a market economy? This question has not just perplexed the Chinese people. In the eyes of many political leaders around the world, the market economy and socialism are two totally separate systems that cannot be combined. In September 1991, on her third visit to China, the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, "socialism and market economy cannot be compatible. Socialism cannot have a market economy. To have a market economy, we must practice capitalism and privatization."[33] Numerous ideological obstacles existed, including the "leftist" dogma and the rightist ideas of neoliberalism. In response to such constraints, Deng Xiaoping stressed in his talks during his inspection tour in southern China in 1992 that both planning and the market were economic instruments, but "not the essential difference between socialism and capitalism." China, he said, "should not hesitate to draw on the achievements of all cultures, and to learn from other countries, including the developed capitalist countries, all the advanced methods of operation and techniques of management that reflect the laws governing modern socialized production" (Deng 1993, 373). This understanding freed people from the constraints of the old ideas.

Socialism can develop a market economy. But how? Jiang Zemin (2016a, 203–204) explored this question in depth. First, he concluded, there needed to be a change in the operating mechanisms of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), especially large and medium-sized ones, to bring them into the market, enhance their vitality and improve their quality. This was the key to establishing the system of the socialist market economy, consolidating the socialist system, and giving full play to the superiority of socialism. Second, the basic

economic system at the primary stage of socialism required a modified and improved ownership structure, with public ownership playing a dominant role and different economic sectors developing side by side. The forms of public ownership could and should be diversified; in modern enterprises, the joint-stock system is a form of organization of capital that is conducive to the separation of ownership and management rights, that improves the operational efficiency of enterprises and capital, and that can apply in both capitalism and socialism. Third, China needed to accelerate the reform of state-owned enterprises, with the goal of establishing a modern enterprise system. The country needed to follow the principles of "clear property rights, well defined rights and responsibilities, separation of government administration from the management of enterprises, and scientific management" in order to bring large and medium-sized SOEs into a standardized corporate system so that they could become corporate entities and subjects of competition adaptable to the market. Reform was also to be carried out in monopoly industries with the introduction of competition mechanisms. Large companies and large enterprise groups were to be developed through market and policy guidance, and small and medium-sized SOEs were to be further invigorated. Fourth, China would improve its modern market system and strengthen macro-economic control. It would give greater play to the basic role of the market in resource allocation, and improve its modern market system so as to make it unified, open, competitive, and capable of operating smoothly. Meanwhile, the transformation of government functions was a major issue in adapting the state superstructure to the economic base and in promoting economic development. The government was assigned the role of carrying out overall planning, policy control, provision of services and information, coordinated organizing, and inspection and supervision.

The next question was: how was the socialist market economy system to be improved after it was established? The collective leadership of the CPC Central Committee, with Hu Jintao (2016) as General Secretary, studied this question intensively. In October 2003, the Third Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee adopted the "Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Issues concerning the Improvement of the System of the Socialist Market Economy," which listed the following main tasks: improving the basic economic system with public ownership playing a dominant role and different economic sectors developing side by side; establishing a system that was conducive to gradually changing the dual urban-rural structure; creating a mechanism to promote the coordinated development of regional economies; building a unified, open and competitive modern market system; improving the system of macro-economic control, along with administrative management and economic and legal institutions; improving the systems of employment, income distribution and social security; and establishing mechanisms to promote sustainable economic and social development.[34] First, China was to take various measures for the effective realization of public ownership and the speeding-up of adjustments to the layout and structure of the state-owned economy. It was necessary for China to adapt to the trend that is seeing the continuous development of economic marketization; to further increase the vitality of the publicly-owned sector of the economy; to vigorously develop the mixed-ownership sector of the economy with the participation of state-owned capital, collective capital and non-public capital, and ensure the diversification of major investors; and to make the joint-stock system the main form of public ownership. Second, China was to establish a modern system of property rights with clear ownership, well defined rights and responsibilities, strict protection and smooth

transfer. Property rights include rights to real estate, creditors' rights, equity rights and intellectual property rights. Third, corporate governance structures would be improved in China as per the requirements of the modern enterprise system. This would include standardizing the rights and responsibilities of shareholders' meetings, boards of directors, supervisory committees and managers, and improving the system for the appointment of enterprise leaders. Specifically, meetings of shareholders would decide the membership of the boards of directors and supervisory committees, the boards of directors would select managers, and the managers would exercise their right to hire leading personnel, so that a mechanism of checks and balances was formed between the organ of power, the decision-making organ, the supervisory organ and the managers. Fourth, China was to transform the economic management functions of its government. It would deepen the reform of the administrative review and approval system, and effectively alter the government's economic management function so that it served mainly the subjects of the market, and created a sound environment for development. The government was to strengthen its research and policy formulation efforts in the area of medium-and long-term plans for national economic and social development, and to put forward major development strategies, basic tasks and industrial policies with a view to promoting the all-round development of the national economy and society, and to achieving economic growth in harmony with China's population and resource environment. During the years between 2002 and 2012 the 17th and 18th CPC National Congresses laid out plans for further perfecting the system of the socialist market economy. As a consequence, that system has been greatly improved in the past decade.

Now, after the initial improvements had been made to the system of the socialist market economy, how was it to be developed further? To answer this question, the central leadership with Xi Jinping at its core conducted intensive studies. In November 2013 the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee adopted the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform," which pointed out that China needed to

> deepen economic system reform by centering on the decisive role of the market in allocating resources, adhere to and improve the basic economic system, and accelerate the improvement of the modern market system, macro-control system and open economic system. We must accelerate the transformation of the growth pattern, and make China an innovative country. We must promote more efficient, equal and sustainable economic development.[35]

The decision passed at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee stressed that reforming the economic system constituted the focus of deepening the reform in a comprehensive manner. The underlying issue was how to strike a balance between the role of the government and that of the market, so as to let the market play the decisive role in allocating resources and allow the government to perform its functions better. The resolution declared that China would actively and in orderly fashion promote market-oriented reform in breadth and in depth, greatly reducing the government's role in the direct allocation of resources, and would promote resource allocation according to market rules, market prices and market competition, so as to maximize benefits and optimize efficiency.[36] It also stated clearly that the government's main role and responsibility was to maintain the stability of the macro-economy, strengthen and improve public services, safeguard fair competition, strengthen oversight of the market, maintain market order,

promote sustainable development and common prosperity, and intervene in situations where market failure occurred.[37] In the seven years since this decision was adopted, the system of the socialist market economy has continuously improved and matured. This was evident in the resolution adopted at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, which identified development as an important component in China's basic socialist economic system, occupying an ever more prominent position.

4. It Is a System That Is Rooted in China and That Is Able to Develop Continuously through Absorbing the Country's Rich Culture

4.1. Rooted in the Soil of Socialism, China's Governance Should Aim at Perfecting the System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Article 1 of the current Constitution of the People's Republic of China clearly stipulates that

> the People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China.[38]

China's governance is built on socialism, and can never live without this foundation. The fundamental goal for China as it modernizes its governance system and capacity is to improve and develop the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and to consolidate and strengthen the people's democratic dictatorship, which should never be weakened.

Some Western scholars label the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system as "state capitalism" or "new bureaucratic capitalism," in an effort to discredit and thereby delegitimize China's system and governance. This view is profoundly ignorant. The People's Republic of China, founded in 1949, completed its socialist revolution in 1956, establishing the basic socialist system and eliminating all systems of exploitation. In China, there are neither feudal landlords nor capital-based aristocrats. People are equal to one another. In contemporary China, public ownership plays a dominant role, distribution is according to work, and in politics the people are the masters of the country. Where does the "state capitalism" come from when there are no capitalist elements? China has made use of the market economy system, which is not unique to capitalism, but which is a requirement of socialized mass production. In Chinese society, where there are officials but no bureaucrats, there are people's servants and civil servants but no "lords" riding on the people's backs, how could there be "bureaucratic capitalism"?

Other Western scholars place their hopes on imagined future developments within the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system. They believe that once China achieves modernization and becomes wealthy, with its per capita GDP reaching the level found in developed countries, there will sooner or later be a multiparty system or separation of powers. This is an illusion, based on a self-deceptive assumption and with no possibility of being realized. The system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is first and foremost a socialist system, which undergoes constant innovation and is self-perfecting. In the course of its development, it will not deviate from the socialist path. Instead, it will reflect the essence of socialism in a more and more convincing manner.

4.2. Firmly Rooted in the Soil of Chinese History and Transforming the Country's Rich Historical, Institutional and Cultural Resources into Advantages in Governance

Speaking at the Second All-Members Meeting of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee on October 31, 2019, Xi Jinping said,

> In the course of thousands of years of historical evolution, the Chinese nation has created a splendid ancient civilization, and has formed a wealth of concepts concerning the state system and its governance. These concepts include the ideal of the great harmony with the rule of the public spirit beneath the heavens when the great Way prevails; the tradition of the great unification of the country, in which people from every corner of the world share the same customs as a big "family"; the rule of virtue that advocates the dominant role of virtue and the supplementary role of punishment; the people-centered idea that places the people in a more important position than the monarch, and that identifies a good policy as one that will nourish the people; the concept of equality that levels the noble and the humble, the rich and the poor, the excessive and the deficient; the unyielding pursuit of justice in legal affairs; the moral integrity of filial piety and loyalty; the sense of propriety, righteousness, honor and shame; the criteria for selecting and appointing officials based on virtue and merit; the spirit of reform in an old state ever since the Zhou Dynasty [1046–256 B.C.]; the diplomatic manner of being kind to neighbors and seeking harmony with all nations; the idea of peace that cherishes harmony and opposes war; and so on. (Xi 2020a, 5–6)

Not only this, he continued, but

> China long occupied a leading position in the history of human development, and since ancient times has gradually formed a set of state and governance systems that cover areas such as the court, prefecture and county structures, land use, taxation, examinations for official selection, disciplinary supervision and the military, and which were drawn upon by neighboring countries and nationalities. (Xi 2020a, 6)

It can be said that the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China's governance system are rooted in the soil of the country's national history and culture, and are the result of long-term endogenous evolution and continuous improvement.

From a systemic perspective, China during its history has absorbed the positive aspects of various systems of oversight. All of the dynasties in Chinese history attached great importance to the role of supervision, and established effective systems in this regard. For example, the Tang Dynasty established a mature and stable supervisory system that had one ministry with three departments. At the local level, the early Tang Dynasty had the entire country divided into ten supervision areas, to be inspected by 10 imperial officials. In the year 733, the number of these areas was increased to 15, and the number of supervising officials also increased to 15. The supervising officials performed inspection duties, but were also in charge of formulating laws and regulations. The supervision law of the Tang Dynasty, represented by the "Six Supervisory Decrees," is based on the rule of law in a relatively complete sense. In addition to the six decrees, the emperor gave clear instructions on the key points of each inspection tour by the imperial supervision officials. In China's socialist system, still more attention is paid to the state system of oversight. In March 2018 the Supervision Law of the People's Republic of China was enacted, amounting in effect to new national anti-corruption legislation. Through a range of legal procedures, this law turned the position of the party into the will of the state, and has had a far-reaching impact on the building of a centralized, unified, authoritative and efficient

state supervisory system with Chinese characteristics. The law provides strong legal support for new initiatives in anti-corruption work, and for securing massive victories against corruption. On March 23, 2018, the State Supervisory Committee of the People's Republic of China was established in accordance with this legislation. The general framework was thus created for a new stage in the reform of China's state supervision system. In 2019, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the State Supervisory Committee focused their attention on achieving full coverage and greater effectiveness in their oversight of public power and public officials, while also introducing differentiated measures to expand the supervisory function to include state-owned enterprises, financial enterprises and universities, and extending this function to the grassroots level. In this way, supervision has progressed from "visible coverage" to "effective coverage," with the supervisory work of the party and the state gradually extending to every field and every corner, on the basis of enhanced standardization and law-based actions.

Over the course of China's history, each of the dynasties also attached great importance to the selection and management of officials, stressing that the key to successful governance lies in the quality of the officials, and that a country's strength lies in the development of competent personnel. This is certainly true of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. China assigns a strategic place to perfecting its personnel system. The CPC adheres to the principle of the party exercising leadership over personnel management; it assembles the best minds from among the population, draws fully on their expertise, and maximizes its efforts to make China a talent-strong country. The party seeks a more proactive, open, and effective policy for training competent professionals, with a good eye for identifying talent; sincerity in valuing gifted people; the foresight to employ them; earnestness in keeping them; and a ready welcome for them into its ranks. This better enables it to attract bright people from both within and outside the party, and both in China and abroad, to join in pursuing the great endeavor of the party and the people. China encourages and guides people with talent to work in poor, remote areas, in border areas with mainly ethnic minority populations, and in old revolutionary base areas, as well as in communities and on the frontlines. It works to foster a positive environment in which everyone wants, strives, and is able to excel themselves, and can do full justice to their talents. It aims to ensure that in every field people's creativity is given full expression, while their ingenuity and expertise flow freely.

Second, the Communist Party of China has always paid attention to the training of successors, so that trained personnel work not for their own benefit, but for that of the world. In a speech at the National Conference of Organizational Work on July 3, 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out,

> Our party has a quite complete system for training successors, which is a unique advantage of the political system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. As early as in the Yan'an period, our party put forward the idea that it was our combat task to train a large number of new cadres in a planned way. In the early 1960s, our party put forward the strategic task of training millions of successors for the cause of proletarian revolution. After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, it put forward the policy of "Four Modernizations" and launched the construction of the "third echelon." (Xi 2018, 5)

He further pointed out that the law of the growth of cadres determines that their development requires time, not just five or 10 years, but 15 or 20 years, or even longer. "Our

party insists on testing and training cadres in a step-by-step manner, which is our institutional advantage" (Xi 2018, 5). This type of training not only makes the cadres politically reliable and professional competent, but also prevents sectarianism, so that the cadres can truly seek to work for the happiness of the people.

As General Secretary Xi Jinping also explains,

> To say that socialism with Chinese characteristics is good or bad should be based on facts and on the judgment of the Chinese people, rather than on the subjective judgment of those who wear colored glasses. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese people have every confidence that they can provide a Chinese solution to humanity's quest for a better system. (Xi 2017b, 37)

It is an obvious fact that the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is one that can be constantly improved in order to achieve a better life for the people, and one that can concentrate the efforts of all parties to achieve a miracle on earth.

Notes

1. See, "Greater Sense of Gain for the People through Scientific Overall Planning with Prominent Key Projects and Precise Focus." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, February 28, 2015.
2. See, "The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 19th CPC Central Committee Met Journalists from Home and Abroad." [In Chinese.] *Qstheory.cn*. Accessed April 22, 2020. http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuanqu/2017-10/29/c_1121873227.htm.
3. "Two no worries and three guarantees" refers to the main goal in China's relocation-related poverty alleviation. "Two no worries" means no worries about food or clothing, while "three guarantees" means mandatory education, basic health care and housing security.
4. See, "Form Common Understanding and Strive to Solve the Prominent Issues of 'Two No Worries and Three Guarantees' in One Effort." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, April 18, 2019.
5. See, "Maintain Our Original Aspiration, Carry Out Our Mission, Identify Shortcomings, Strengthen Policy Implementation, and Ensure Concrete Achievements in Thematic Education." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, June 1, 2019.
6. See, "Consolidate Achievements in the Reform of Party and State Institutions and Advance the Modernization of China's Governance System and Capability." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, July 6, 2019.
7. See, "Remain True to Our Original Aspiration, Implement the People-Centered Idea of Development, and Build a More Beautiful Northern Borderline." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, July 17, 2019.
8. See, "Strengthen the Integrated Coordination of Reform and Promote with High Efficiency the Maturity and Stabilization of Various Institutions." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, September 10, 2019.
9. See, "Further Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee and Improve the Capability and Level of Governance of the Modern Socialist International Metropolis." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, November 4, 2019.
10. See, "Central Economic Work Meeting Was Held in Beijing." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, December 13, 2019.
11. See, "Take the Lead to Keep Remaining True to Our Original Mission as a Lifelong Project and Always Maintain the Political Character and Momentum of a Communist." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, December 28, 2019.
12. See, "The Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee Was Held in Beijing." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, November 1, 2019.
13. See, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-11/15/content_5340776.htm. Accessed April 15, 2020.
14. See, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-05/09/content_5389983.htm. Accessed April 15, 2020.

15. See, "Xi Jinping on Scientific and Technological Innovation: A Strong Country in Science and Technology Should Work Hard on Technologies that Mark the Progress of Human Society." [In Chinese.] Accessed April 15, 2020. http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n1/2016/0318/c385475-28209512.html.
16. See, "Xi Jinping Stressed in the 8th Group Study of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that the Rural Vitalization Strategy Should Be the Focus in Promoting the Comprehensive Upgrading of Agriculture, Comprehensive Progress of the Countryside, and Comprehensive Development of Farmers." [In Chinese.] Accessed April 15, 2020. http://www.12371.cn/2018/09/22/ARTI1537615191695133.shtml.
17. See, "China Surpassed the United States in the Number of Space Rocket Launches in 2018." [In Chinese.] Accessed April 15, 2020. http://news.youth.cn/jsxw/201812/t20181222_11822272.htm.
18. See, "World Space Rocket Launches Exceeded 100 in 2019, with 1/3 by China, which Outnumbered the United States and Russia." [In Chinese.] Accessed April 15, 2020. http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1231/c1011-31530059.html.
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33. Quoted in "The Historical Decision that Changed China's Destiny." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, July 10, 2012.

34. See, "The Third Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee Was Held in Beijing." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, October 15, 2003.
35. See, "The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee Was Held in Beijing." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, November 13, 2013.
36. See, "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, November 16, 2013.
37. See, "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform." [In Chinese.] *People's Daily*, November 16, 2013.
38. See, "Constitution of the People's Republic of China." [In Chinese.] Accessed April 20, 2020. https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1595750131561645455&wfr=spider&for=pc.

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